

# Watergate: The President's Mood

A lot of my friends who know my long experience with the President come by and say, "How is the President standing up in this time of crisis?"

I can assure you that the President, as in the crises he's undergone before, is standing up strongly. He's developed a strong leadership, he's determined to move the nation ahead, and you'll find that, with spirit and with cooperation of the people, this nation will go forward from the present problems. It will move ahead very well.

Looking at how the President in the past has reacted to major crises—and I suppose that I have been with him during most of the times they occurred—I can remember when we were both quite young in 1946, when it took great courage for him to come out of the Navy and run for office against a Congressman who was then considered to be unbeatable. Yet, he ran hard, fought hard, and won. In 1952, though, in what looked like the darkest days of the Eisenhower-Nixon campaign, he again reacted with strength and took his case to the American people, and I

different throughout the remainder of the Nixon meeting.

The President is a man who withstood an attack which almost brought his death in Venezuela. He is a man you have seen as President, who has had the courage to make the decisions he believes are right and to stand by them, to stand on principle when most were critical and the country was torn at the time of Cambodia. . . . While many thought the mining of Haiphong harbor was wrong, and many thought that we would never reach the Soviet Union for the meetings which took place a short time later, the fact is that the President had the courage to do what he thought was right. And I can assure you that this was the cour-

*This is the second of two articles dealing with the impact of the Watergate affair on Richard Nixon's presidency. The writer is the Director of Communications for the Executive Branch. The article is adapted from an address before the National Forest Products Association.*

think he emerged as a stronger Vice President as a result of that experience.

In 1959, I was with him in the Kitchen Debate. And, it was an unexpected experience. It was one where we went in to pay the normal calls on a leader of the Soviet Union, Mr. Khrushchev, and almost immediately after the photographers finished their pictures, Mr. Khrushchev began an attack which was climaxed, as you recall, on your television screen, when Mr. Nixon said, "You don't know everything." It was continued in a house where they debated head-to-head on issues. As a result of the then Vice President's ability to react, he won new respect for himself, and more importantly, new respect for this country and its government and our ability to stand up to whatever the onslaught might come from the other side.

As a result of that move from strength, at that point forward, our relationships appeared to move better with the Soviet Union and certainly Mr. Khrushchev's attitude was much



*Two of President Nixon's "Six Crises": The Kitchen Debate with Soviet Premier Khrushchev in Moscow in 1959; Rioters attacking Mr. Nixon's car during his visit to Caracas, Venezuela, in 1958.*



age he showed in the bombing which led to the peace negotiations and the finality in Vietnam is one which stands him in good stead at this point. . . . Despite what has been said around the world, there is a great deal of respect for the courage of the President and for the courage of the American people.

And I have only one other thing. All nations watch how we stand together in a time of crisis. I urge you to look well and be critical when things are wrong, and to stand up together, because these are the things that build the spirit which has built this nation, will move it ahead at this particular time.

This has been a time of some grievous errors, apparently some miscon-

duct by officials within and without government. There have been errors made, and we all share in our concern over them. We share in the shock at those things which have occurred. But, yet, when you look at the system of the United States, it's a system which is revealed here, a system which has the full support of the President in trying to find the guilt, to find those who are innocent, and, I must emphasize that we must not prejudge because many of these will prove to be innocent as they go ahead. . . .

I think it's time to call for a new look at the responsibility of the office, responsibility of the press, responsibility of the government, the administration, the Congress, and the responsibility of the American people.

My profession has basically been in the free press—and I'm a strong advocate of it. I look forward to the day soon when I will return to that profes-

sion, because I believe that if we have a free press and a strong press and one which persevered, we have a strong part of the process of a major fact that we do have problems as a nation. Yet, I submit to you that they are problems not just for a nation to solve as a whole, not just problems of a President and his assistants and his Cabinet, but they are problems of the Congress, they're problems of the people, and they're problems that we all share as we progress. Above all, it's time for us to be sure that we keep perspective. We can't be overcome with the particular things which make the headlines at the moment and forget the goals and opportunities we have, to move things through this Congress, through this government, through this system of ours to make 1973 a better year in terms of domestic progress and peace.

It is a time of concern, concern of

American government under our system. The press has persevered and it's brought out things which we perhaps would not have done before. And give the press credit for doing that.

Yet, having done so, it's also a time of great responsibility for the press. Responsibility not to bow to rumors, responsibility to avoid vitriol, recrimination or the exacerbation of the strain between the government and the press, which perhaps has gone on too long. This is a time to work together with some conciliation.

We must build, and I believe that—with the strength and determination that we have in the spirit of the government today—we can and will move ahead in a way which will give us greater progress in the United States.

The President has told bipartisan leaders of the House and Senate that he will send to the Congress the message which will call for an independent, bipartisan committee which will examine thoroughly all of the electoral processes. He will recommend study of the number of years in office the president and our congressmen should hold. The study will concentrate on matters such as abuses of election funds, on election practices in big cities, on all the aspects of government. Properly pursued and properly followed, in a spirit of bipartisanship and independence, this study can have a very positive impact.

At this time I believe we are facing

all. Here I quote from the President to leave a final thought for you the other night, speaking here in Washington, he said: "Why does this kind of challenge have to come to us? Why do we have to endure? Let me remind you that the finest steel has to go through the hottest fires." This is a nation, which through all of its years from birth, has gone through the hottest fires and built stronger steel with each step, and who will emerge through this stronger than ever. This is a nation which has the finest steel to move forward toward progress, toward peace, toward the goals and challenges which can be obtained in 1973. I plead for perspective and I plead for unity in moving ahead, because, united together, nothing can stop the United States.